

# THE SEASIDE GIRL

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"We must go! back to the hotel," cried Stella, springing up with a scowl on her face.

"A DOG hasn't the intelligence to do what you say," remarked the fair man with the monocle; and his remark was made very positively. "Billy has!" retorted his dark, clean-shaven companion, insistently. "Have any article you like to ransom, anywhere in this room, and when we are on the beach, half a mile away, Billy will come and fetch it."

The fair man and the dark man were both young and comely, both were arrayed in smart and stylish garments, and both were enjoying a seaside holiday at a popular Devonshire resort. At this moment they were standing in their sitting room, looking at a black and white fox terrier, whose limited tail quivered with excitement. He knew that he was the subject of conversation, and that his master expected him to do something, which his master's friend would be able to do. "Oh, well," said Billy, in dog language, "try me, that's all!"

"Very good, William," responded the skeptic, and produced his tobacco pouch scoffingly. "I place this in the center of the table. The window will be left open, and I shall expect you to bring me this article."

"It will be brought," said the dog's master, calmly.

"Now take Billy away, Frank, while I get my stick."

In a few minutes he was joined by his companion, and the two men started for the beach. On arriving at the cliffs they descended to the ocean levels by means of a winding path cut out of the reddish Devonian sandstone. It was a bright, breezy morning, with a sunny sky of the deepest blue. Frank and his friend were glad to shelter from the heat and glare in the shadow of a mighty rock, which thrust its gigantic bulk loftily from the smooth sands. Billy, with his tongue hanging out, squatted beside them, and looked with eager intelligence at his master.

"Fire ahead, Dick," observed the skeptic, disbelievingly.

"Billy," said Dick, taking the terrier's head between his two hands, "go home and bring Frank's tobacco pouch, which is on the table in the sitting room. You understand? Good!" He released the dog.

"Home, Billy, home!"

The terrier did not wait for further instructions, but raced up the cliff path at a surprising rate.

"Any dog can understand an order to go home," scoffed the skeptic, and stared at the blue foam-flecked sea.

Dick Bashford laughed contentedly and loaded his pipe. Long before his smoke was finished Billy reappeared with the tobacco pouch, which he dropped at his master's feet.

"You can smoke now, Frank," said that gentleman.

"Well, I'm hanged!" Frank stared at the pouch and stared at the smirking Billy, who was being patted.

"I'll give you ten pounds for the beast."

"Ten pounds!" said Mr. Bashford, extending himself lazily on the warm stones. "would be very acceptable to a hard-up barister. But Billy isn't worth it."

"I think so, when he can perform such a clever trick."

"He wouldn't do it for you, because you don't know the dodge."

"Oh!" Frank looked disgusted. "It's only a dodge, then?"

"Yes, Billy is a dog and not a human being. See this, Delham," and Bashford produced a slim bottle from his pocket. "This is a special kind of scent called kan, which comes from Australia. I have trained Billy on this scent, so you see—"

Delham interrupted indignantly: "I do see, hang you! When I let the room you dropped some of the scent on my pouch!" he snelt it—"yes, you did!"

Dick nodded and grinned. "Billy will pick up and bring to me any article impregnated with this scent," said he, quietly. "When he went home he simply nosed about until he found the one article perfumed with kan."

"Well," observed Frank, after an astonished pause, "it's a good thing that you aren't a criminal, Dick. If you took a fancy to anything, all you'd have to do is to drop some kan on it and send Billy for your choice."

Dick nodded again. "Only kan is so little known in England that the articles I want are not scented with it."

"What do you particularly want—a wife, I expect!"

"Huh! Billy would scarcely bring a young woman along, my boy. And to tell you the truth, Frank, my uncle—you know Col. Slade—has already selected the future Mrs. Richard Bashford."

"He might leave you to do that," said Delham, stroking the terrier.

"He might, but being rich and pigheaded, he expects every one to obey him without question. A month or so ago he wrote commending me to come down to Chiselhurst and propose to a girl called Ella Penton. He didn't even give me the option of seeing if I liked her. I was to marry her at once."

"What not? Col. Slade is a jester."

"Say rather a mandarin, since he has lived for centuries in China. Well, Frank, you may guess that I declined, and so I have lost a chance of inheriting three thousand a year from my autocratic uncle."

Frank sat up aghast. "Do you mean to say that he has disinherited you?"

"Yes, just because I won't marry this mysterious Miss Penton blindly. Catch me; since I am to have no option of refusing. Probably she's a red-headed, freckled idiot with a bad temper. The offer remains open for one month."

"She may be good-tempered and pretty, Dick. See her, at all events."

"I shan't. Primed by my uncle, she'll expect a proposal, which I am not prepared to make, even if she's a Venus. I choose my own wife."

The young men discoursed on this topic for quite half an hour, and Frank, in spite of the possible three thousand a year, could not help approving of his friend's attitude. To be bullied into marrying an unknown bide was too ridiculous. "It's in China, I think," mused Delham, "that the bridegroom never sees his wife until the knot is tied."

"I daresay," said Dick, tartly, "but I shan't marry with my eyes shut."

"Then defy Col. Slade, and tell Billy to bring you a wife."

The terrier wagged his tail and cocked his ears. "I can't pick her out unless she's scented with kan,"

said his eyes, plainly, whereat Dick, with a laugh, rolled him over. After that frolic the young men went for a swim, and then walked home to their hotel, talking of a proposed golf match.

For the next week Delham and Bashford enjoyed themselves, although neither of them was rich. Frank was a solicitor, and Dick was a barister, and not yet made fortune, and it took them all their time to keep their heads above the troubled waters of life's ocean. Shortly Delham returned to London, leaving Dick behind. He gave advice at the railway station without charging six and eightpence, to the effect that his friend should at least see Miss Penton before risking the loss of an assured income.

"I'm not going to buy a pig in a poke," grumbled Bashford, with more force than elegance; and his adviser departed, sighing over his obstinacy.

Left alone, Dick wandered back to his hotel, thinking wistfully over Col. Slade's outrageous command. Even for the sake of a prospective income, he needed it, it was absurd to adopt an idiotic Chinese custom. "Why, it does away with all the fun of making love to a girl," growled Dick, and therein lay his chief objection to his uncle's arrangement.

On the fourth day after Delham's departure Dick strolled on the beach with Billy, to whom he talked nonsense, since there was no one else with whom to converse. Billy was an excellent listener, and passed no criticisms. But on this occasion his master's baldie bored him, for he disappeared when Dick sat down for a rest. In ten minutes he returned with a lady's hand bag of green morocco in his mouth. A swift showed Bashford that the bag was scented with kan, and for this reason Billy had annexed it.

"You thief!" reproved Dick, indignantly; "what's to be done now?"

Obviously, there was only one answer to this question, and Dick rose to restore the bag to its fair owner. But although he looked up and down the beach, behind the many rocks and through the lulling machines, he could not find a single person, since every visitor had gone to luncheon. "I must examine the bag," said Bashford, and did so. It contained a dupty lace handkerchief, the photograph of a pretty girl, ten shillings in silver and pence, and two of three-mails inscribed "Miss Stella Dane." These last were handwritten, and a note intimated that their owner lived, just then, at the Francis Drake hotel. Dick knew the house, and proceeded there at once with the honest purpose of restoring Billy's stolen goods.

"And perhaps," he said severely to the terrier, "you have done me a good turn, you rip. The girl will be wiser to talk to them you." Billy agreed, as his master talked rubbish instead of discoursing about rats and biscuits.

A card sent in at the Francis Drake hotel brought Miss Stella Dane into the waiting room. She was the very girl of the photograph, extremely pretty, fair and tall, with a figure as perfect as the Paris frock which clothed it so admirably. She accepted her property with profuse thanks. "I must have laid it down beside me when I was resting," she explained. "No doubt your dear little dog took it by mistake."

"He took it because it's scented with kan," said Dick, grimly, and explained how Billy's unusual training had led him to become a thief. "I am so very sorry. Perhaps you will permit me to return and express my sorrow."

"What more can you say than you have said?" asked Miss Dane, surprised, but with a twinkle in her sea-blue eyes.

"Hm, when I can collect my thoughts," Dick assured her, earnestly. "I am overwhelmed at present—very naturally."

He gave her an eloquent glance, which told Miss Dane that her charming personality was the cause of his being overwhelmed. She would not have been a woman had she not felt complimented, so graciously gave him permission to call that evening after dinner. "I must introduce you to my aunt, Mrs. Hale," said the lady, patting Billy—"and do bring this darling."

"He doesn't deserve it," said Dick, severely, and took Billy home to cram him with tit-bits. Several words and kind actions did not as a rule go together, so Billy was rather surprised at his master's inconsistency. "But I shouldn't wonder," explained Dick, "if you have brought me the wife I wanted, Billy. She's a ripping girl, anyhow."

With this idea in his mind, it is scarcely to be wondered at that Mr. Richard Bashford became a well-known figure at the Francis Drake hotel. He discovered that Mrs. Hale, the chambermaid and aunt, was a stout lady averse to exercise, so cunningly proposed he and Miss Dane should explore the surrounding uplands. The young lady, informed of Dick's position, and approving of his good looks, quite agreed; so for the next three weeks—Bashford prolonged his holiday for this especial purpose—the two walked over miles of the rich Devonshire country. They strolled along beaches, and had tea in various lonely farmhouses; they played golf together, and exchanged their views

on life. Billy came everywhere with them, and was made much of by Stella Dane. "He's turned a dull holiday into a jolly one," said she.

"Does that mean," began Dick, whose heart was throbbing with joy, "that—"

"It means nothing," interrupted Stella, warningly, "except that if you ask such questions I shall invite my aunt to join us in our walks."

"I don't think the invitation would be accepted," replied Mr. Bushford, audaciously, whereat Stella laughed and agreed with him.

Naturally, the intimacy between the girl and boy—they were little else—progressed rapidly, and they found a great deal to talk about. Dick, by this time, was fastidious in love, and Miss Dane—although she would never acknowledge it—felt her heart flutter when this amiable young gentleman paid her visits. Billy acted as chaperon on all occasions, and hunted rabbits and nuts according to locality, while the human beings talked. Stella loved Billy, and declared that he had brought them together. "So very clever of him," she said, kissing his smooth head, much to Dick's envy.

"It was because of the scent," said Dick. "How strange you should use it. Doesn't the use of the same scent seem to bring us together?"

Stella ignored this too-pointed question. "I hope you don't use scent!" said she, seriously. "I detect a man who scents himself."

"Oh, I only buy it for the sake of training Billy," said Dick, hastily. "He'd fetch the moon if there was a kin smell about it."

"He certainly fetched my bag," said Stella, lightly. "And you," hinted Dick, delicately. "I wonder if Billy has brought me a—"

"We must get back to the hotel," cried Stella, springing up with a scarlet face. She always did interrupt when Dick grew too explicit, and when his holiday ended he was no nearer a declaration than when they had first met.

When Mrs. Hale and her niece journeyed later to Hiramcombe, Dick returned dismally to town with Billy and a photograph of Stella Dane. This he showed to Frank, whose chambers adjoined his. Mr. Delham chuckled.

"So Billy brought you a wife after all," said the solicitor; "but remember, she will cost you three thousand a year."

"She's worth it," cried Dick, kissing the photograph. "Wait until you see her."

Frank did wait, and did see her, when Miss Dane, under the stout aunt's wing, returned to a Mayfair house. More than that, he became quite jealous. But he need not have been, for Frank was a most loyal friend, who did his best to bring about the match by relating Col. Slade's Chinese methods of matrimony. Stella could not but be impressed. "What is Miss Fenton like?" she asked, anxiously.

"I don't know, my does Dick. I believe she's red-haired and scrubby."

"Oh! how can you be so certain?"

"Well, she must have something wrong with her," confessed Frank, candidly. "or Col. Slade wouldn't be so anxious for Dick to marry her in the dark."

Stella admitted that to marry an unknown woman

was too much to expect from a modern young man, and was very kind to Dick when he called again. So kind, indeed, that the barrister took his courage in both hands and asked her to be his wife in a beautiful speech. Stella said "No!"

"You mean yes. Oh, say you mean yes!" implored the jocular Dick.

"If your uncle consents, I mean yes," answered Miss Dane, reflectively.

"Well, that's a fater; he'll never consent."

"Why not?" Stella drew herself up indignantly. "Because your name isn't Fenton," snapped Bushford, whose nerves were wearing thin. "If you don't marry me I'll go to Australia—or to the bad."

But he did not go to either destination, but to an afternoon tea at Frank's chambers, to which Mrs. Hale and Stella had been invited. But before the ladies put in an appearance an unexpected guest arrived in the person of Col. Slade—brawny, red-faced and aggressive. Not finding his nephew in his own chambers he crossed to those of Delham, and at once demanded that Dick should come down to Chiselhurst and marry Ella Fenton.

"I haven't seen her, and I shan't," said Dick sulkily, but firmly.

"You'll see her when you propose," stormed the colonel; "take her as your wife and you'll get three thousand a year when I die. What's the use of my being your uncle if I can't settle you in life?"

"You would settle me," said Dick, grimly; "and with a red-haired, freckled—"

"Miss Fenton is lovely, you several kinds of ass."

"Then marry her yourself, uncle. I shan't. So there!"

"Your reason—your reason?" bellowed Slade, fiercely.

"I'm—I'm—" Dick hesitated, then plunged—"I'm in love."

"In love!" The colonel rolled his eyes and grew purple. "You dare to fall in love without asking my permission! In China you would be kicked out of house and home if you dared to disobey your parents in—"

"You aren't my parent of mine," growled the badgered Dick, "and this isn't China. If she'll have me I'll marry her."

"She—she—she! Who is she?" and the colonel's white hair bristled.

As if in answer to this question, the door opened, and Mrs. Hale sailed in with Stella behind her. Dick caught the girl's hand and drew her forward. "This is she," he said, distinctly, "and if she consents to be my wife she shall be. Say yes, Stella, darling."

"Yes," said Stella, demurely, and Mrs. Hale clapped her fat hands approvingly.

Col. Slade's face was a study of disgusted surprise. "What are you humbugging me about!" he demanded, in a stentorian voice. "You refuse to marry Miss Fenton without seeing her, and when you do see her you—"

Dick gasped, and so did Frank, who was in the back-ground.

"Is this Miss—Miss Fenton," said Stella, with a gracious bow to both young men—"the freckled, red-

haired idiot of your imagination? But, of course!"—she looked down and pouted—"if Dick doesn't want to marry me—"

Bushford caught her in his arms. "I do—I do, darling!" He kissed her three times, then collapsed. "What does it mean?" he asked feebly.

"It means that the Chinese custom is right," belated Slade, rubbing his hands, "and I am glad to see that you have obeyed it. You have seen sense."

"I have seen Miss Fenton, and I can see nothing else," said Dick, grinning.

"Perhaps," cooed Mrs. Hale in a fat voice, "I can explain. Ella was annoyed to think that Mr. Bushford would not ever meet her, and would persist in thinking her red-haired and freckled. With me, she therefore went to Devonshire and managed to bring about an understanding in the way we know of."

"But we don't know," exclaimed the young men simultaneously.

"You shouldn't talk so loud on the beach," said Stella, laughing, "especially when you don't know who may be listening."

"You were there, Stella—I mean Ella," gasped Dick, taken aback.

"Behind the rock I heard you describe to Mr. Delham Billy's wonderful trick, and also I heard your very amiable description of me. I therefore sent up to town for the scent, and dropped some on my handbag. In this way we were brought together by this darling," and Ella caught up Billy to cover him with kisses.

"You might have guessed my scheme," she added, with a woman's scorn for a man's denseness, "by the way in which I behaved. I don't allow strange young men to be so friendly with me as to go for walks. But I knew all about you from Col. Slade; must know all about you, so—"

She made a gesture as if dismissing the subject.

"Well," said Dick, audaciously, "I'll marry you, sad—"

"You don't deserve to," said his uncle, sharply. "I offer myself, Ella."

"So do I," observed Frank, with a sly glance at his unhappy friend.

Billy sat up to beg for biscuit. "William is proposing also," said Miss Fenton, gayly. "I accept Billy."

"And Billy's master," said Dick, valorously. She hesitated. "Well, then—" was her reply, and she placed her hand in that of Dick's. He kissed it.

"Billy," Dick remarked, placing the terrier outside the door and pointing to his chambers, which were opposite, "you know what you've to do. Home!"

"Whatever do you mean?" asked Mrs. Hale, with bland amazement.

Before she could ask the question again Billy returned with a small cardboard box, which he dropped at Dick's feet. "Open it, Ella," said Dick.

She did so promptly. "Oh!" she cried, with a woman's appreciation of diamond rings.

"I told you Billy would bring you a wife," said Frank laughing aloud.

"He has also brought him three thousand a year," roared the colonel, beaming.



RING-AROUND-A-ROSY ON THE VILLAGE GREEN.



TWO BY TWO BY THE FIELDS.

PLAY-TIME WITH THE CHILDREN OF OBERAMMERGAU.